

---

TECHNICAL HANDBOOK FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND ENGINEERING  
VOLUME III - HEALTH CARE FACILITIES DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION  
**PART 24 - CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES**

---

**CHAPTER 24-2 APPLICABILITY OF CODES, AND CONSTRUCTION CODES  
AND STANDARDS**

24-2.4 OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION . . . . . (24-2) 6

**24-2.4 OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION**

A. Purpose

To define occupancy classification for the purpose of determining the applicable design criteria for construction in Indian Health Service (IHS) health care facilities.

B. Background

- (1) In 1986, the IHS Design Criteria Committee established construction design parameters for IHS designated ambulatory health centers as those defined by the National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code (NFPA 101), Chapter 12, Section 12-6, New Ambulatory Health Care Centers. The intent of the Committee was to construct IHS ambulatory health centers to a higher life safety standard than that required for business occupancies as defined in the NFPA 101. The Committee classified for the purpose of life safety occupancy IHS designated ambulatory health centers as a business but constructed them to ambulatory health center requirements. The intent was to build IHS health centers to stricter standards than the business requirements of the life safety code. On October 14, 1986, the IHS Design Criteria Committee issued Technical Bulletin No. 1, to define the criteria for identifying future IHS designated ambulatory health center to be constructed using NFPA 101, Chapter 12, Section 12-6, as those with an area greater than 929 m<sup>2</sup>(10,000 ft<sup>2</sup>). This criteria was apparently not clearly understood by the IHS field staff and the facility design team. Confusion arose when the facility design team interpreted that the designation of an ambulatory health center must imply that the occupancy classification must also be that of an ambulatory health center.
- (2) By current IHS practice, IHS designated ambulatory health centers do not meet the life safety definition of an ambulatory health center. By NFPA 101 definition, ambulatory health centers are a building or part of a building used to provide services or treatment to four or more patients at the same time that meets the criteria of either (a. or b.) below:
  - a. Facilities that provide, on an outpatient basis, treatment for patients incapable of taking action for self-preservation under emergency conditions without assistance from others.

---

TECHNICAL HANDBOOK FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND ENGINEERING  
VOLUME III - HEALTH CARE FACILITIES DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION  
**PART 24 - CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES**

---

- b. Facilities that provide, on an outpatient basis, surgical treatment requiring general anesthesia.
- (3) By IHS definition, health centers are an ambulatory facility operating at a minimum of 40 hours per week, staffed with a basic health team offering services for acute and chronic ambulatory problems, and acting as a referral center to other levels of care.
- (4) By current IHS practice, IHS health centers do not provide treatment for patients incapable of taking action for self-preservation under emergency conditions without assistance from others, and do not provide on an outpatient basis surgical treatment requiring general anesthesia.
- (5) An IHS health station is an ambulatory care facility (fixed or mobile) which is geographically separate from an inpatient hospital or health center that provides one or more clinical services and is operated less than 40 hours per week.

C. Design Criteria

(1) INPATIENT FACILITIES

- a. The IHS shall construct all inpatient health care facilities to meet the life safety construction requirements of the most current published edition of the NFPA 101, Chapter 12 (New Health Care Occupancies), and other applicable construction codes as of the date the design criteria for construction is established. The definition of an IHS inpatient facility shall be in agreement with the definition of a hospital facility as defined in NFPA 101.
- b. The occupancy classification of all new and existing IHS designated inpatient facilities shall be hospitals for the purpose of accreditation. The appropriate occupancy chapter in NFPA 101 shall be utilized for the purpose of life safety requirements.

*Exception: An appropriate life safety barrier meeting the construction requirements of NFPA 101 or other applicable codes if erected between the inpatient occupancy portion and other occupancy portions may be constructed to create mixed occupancies as defined in NFPA 101.*

(2) OUTPATIENT FACILITIES

- a. The IHS shall construct all outpatient health care facilities (health centers and/or health stations) to meet the life safety construction requirements of the

---

TECHNICAL HANDBOOK FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND ENGINEERING  
VOLUME III - HEALTH CARE FACILITIES DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION  
**PART 24 - CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES**

---

most current published edition of the NFPA 101, Chapter 26 (New Business Occupancies), and other applicable construction codes as of the date the design criteria for construction is established. The designation of IHS ambulatory facilities (health centers and health stations) shall be in agreement with the definition of a business as defined in NFPA 101.

- b. The occupancy classification of all new and existing IHS designated ambulatory facilities meeting the current IHS practice for outpatient facilities shall be business for the purpose of accreditation. The appropriate occupancy chapter in NFPA 101 shall be utilized for the purpose of life safety requirements.

*Exception No. 1: An appropriate life safety barrier meeting the construction requirements of NFPA 101 or other applicable codes if erected between the business occupancy portion and other occupancy portions may be constructed to create mixed occupancies as defined in NFPA 101.*

*Exception No. 2: Should the medical procedures planned for the outpatient facility meet the definition of NFPA ambulatory health care centers, the facility shall be constructed according to the life safety requirements of the most current published edition of the NFPA 101, Chapter 12 (New Health Care Occupancies), and other applicable construction codes as of the date the design criteria for construction is established. In that case, the facility designation shall be in agreement with the definition of ambulatory health care centers as defined in NFPA 101.*

D. RESCISSION

IHS Technical Bulletin No. 1, Subject: Guidelines for Construction and Equipment of Hospitals and Medical Facilities 1983/1984 Edition, dated October 14, 1986.